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SUBJECT: Guatemalan MFA on Honduran Elections

CLASSIFIED BY: Drew G. Blakeney, Political and Economic Counselor,
State, P/E; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) On November 10, Guatemalan Director General for Bilateral Affairs Carlos Raul Morales (protect) told Pol/Econ Counselor that FonMin Rodas was consulting with his Salvadoran counterpart on whether and under what conditions to recognize the outcome of the November 29 election in Honduras. Morales said he believed the two were discussing using voter turnout as the standard for whether the two countries would recognize the winner. Morales said he did not know the number the two are discussing, but suspected it might be 40-50%. In any case, Guatemala and El Salvador would have a common position, he said, adding that he thought the two governments would set the bar fairly low because their trade with Honduras was too important to allow disruption based on political considerations. Very low voter turnout, he asserted, would make recognition difficult in the face of broad international opposition based on Zelaya's continuing absence from the presidency at the time of the election. Morales predicted that the question of recognition would divide the hemisphere, with opposition coming from South America -- less Peru and Colombia -- as well as from Nicaragua.

¶2. (C) Morales said that he and Rodas would soon discuss whether to send Guatemalan national election observers to Honduras, and whether to support an OAS observation mission. Morales said he would counsel the FonMin to be supportive of both. Morales noted that the apparent ideological similarity between the GOG and Zelaya's GOH is not a good indicator of the state of relations between the two. He said President Colom does not like Zelaya, and that FonMin Rodas detests him. Morales said he personally witnessed a shouting match between Rodas and Zelaya in Brazil during which the two almost came to blows. (Zelaya had accused Rodas of foiling his plan to have the outgoing, Honduran President of the Central American Integration System (SICA) remain in power, rather than depart per the scheduled rotation.) He anticipated that the enmity FonMin Rodas feels for Zelaya would influence the Guatemalan position on whether Zelaya's restoration to power should be a prerequisite for recognition of the new government.
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